

Washington, D.C. Today, Congressman Sanford Bishop, along with a bi-partisan delegation from Georgia, held a meeting with a group of Congressmen and staffers from several key offices within the House of Representatives responsible for the fate of Georgia's PeachCare for Kids health care program. Currently facing a federal funding deficit of \$131 million, PeachCare must receive authorization from Congress in order to continue operating. At this afternoon's meeting, representatives from several Congressional offices including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, the office of the Majority Whip, the House Budget Committee, House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the House Appropriations Committee discussed the possible ways to solve the current funding shortfall. If funding is not secured, PeachCare could run out of cash in March of this year.

Last week, the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives passed separate resolutions asking Congress for help by expressing the urgency of the problem. House Minority Caucus Chair Calvin Smyre (D-Muscogee) subsequently placed a call to Congressman Bishop asking him to set up the meeting with the House leadership, lawmakers and key committee staff.

Congressman Bishop, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee, hopes to work with the state of Georgia and Congress to help further a program which currently provides affordable health care to over 270,000 Georgia children from low-income families. About 23,000 of those children live in Georgia's Second Congressional District, the area represented by Bishop.

"I am pleased to meet here today with this bi-partisan group to help find a solution to the current problems faced by PeachCare. Given the success of this program, it is critical that authorization and continued funding are secured," remarked Congressman Bishop.

PeachCare for kids began covering children in 1999, providing comprehensive health care to children through the age of 18 who do not qualify for Medicaid and live in households with incomes at or below 235% of the federal poverty level. By giving families a choice in health plans and providers, the program has served as a successful model of public-private partnerships, and has received praise from consumers, providers and administrators of the plans.

In addition to Rep. Bishop, other Congressmen in attendance were: House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, Phil Gingrey (R-GA), John Lewis (D-GA), Jim Marshall (D-GA), David Scott (D-GA), Hank Johnson (D-GA), and John Barrow (D-GA).

Others in the state delegation besides Rep. Smyre were Dr. Rhonda Medows, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health which administers the program, Padgett Wilson, Director of Federal Affairs for Governor Sonny Perdue, state Reps. Barry A. Fleming (R-Columbia), Georgia House Majority Whip, Mickey Channell (R-Greene), Chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, and Pat Gardner (D-Dekalb), Member of the Health Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, and Sens. Horacena Tate (D-Fulton), Georgia Minority Caucus Secretary as well as Greg Goggans (R-Douglas), Vice – Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.